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Reproductive Health Training of Turkish Soldiers from Certain Risk Groups

of



Ercan GÖÇGELDI¹, Bilal BAKIR¹, Aygül AKYÜZ², Mahir GÜLEÇ¹
Tülay KAYA², Sadettin GÜNGÖR³, Metin HASDE¹

Medical Sciences

¹Department of Public Health, Gülhane Military Medical Academy,
Ankara - TURKEY

²Gülhane Military Medical Academy and School of Nursing,
Ankara - TURKEY

³Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Gülhane Military Medical Academy,
Ankara - TURKEY

 [Keywords](#)
 [Authors](#)



medsci@tubitak.gov.tr

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Abstract: Aims: The 2003 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS-2003) pointed out significant differences between East Anatolia and the other regions of Turkey. Some studies carried out among Turkish soldiers have underlined the need for more information on Reproductive Health (RH) issues for soldiers with lower educational level and coming from the eastern region of Turkey. Since marriage in Turkey is very important from a demographic perspective, this study has attempted to determine prevalence of marriage and certain characteristics of married soldiers who were involved in the RH courses. The aim of the study was to determine the results of RH training courses for soldiers born in the east region and married soldiers and to identify the prevalence of certain characteristics in the study group. Materials and Methods: In the frame of the Reproductive Health Program (RHP) of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), all soldiers received training in RH by field trainers between April 2004 and January 2006. Soldiers were tested via a questionnaire containing 25 true-false type statements before and after training. The data including 484,949 cases from the TAF RHP database was transferred to a SPSS package program. From the total cases, 135,905 soldiers were born in the Eastern Anatolia region and 36,468 were married; analyses were carried out on these latter cases. Results: Of all soldiers born in the eastern region of Turkey, 47.4% were born in Southeast Anatolia. Primary school graduates constituted the largest group (40.5%). Mean pre-course score was 63.2 ± 15.7 , while post-course score was 81.4 ± 13.8 ($P < 0.001$). Among soldiers born in the eastern region of Turkey, 26% (17,325) resided in other regions before their military service. A comparison of pre- and post-test scores between those still living in the east region and those living outside the east region (pre-test 62.3 and 65.7, respectively; post-test 80.8 and 83.3, respectively) revealed significant differences ($P < 0.001$). The overall rate of marriage among soldiers was found as 7.7%. Among all married soldiers, 70.9% were determined as in the youngest age group, what might be considered as adolescence. 37.2% of married soldiers were primary school graduates and constituted the largest group with respect to education level. The distribution of married soldiers according to the demographic regions in which they were living before military service was determined as follows: 27.9% west, 23.6% central, 11.0% south, 9.3% north, and 26.5% east. Conclusions: Living in the eastern region of Turkey is a contributing factor to low knowledge levels on issues of RH. Early marriage is one indicator of this fact. Lower general educational level seems to be the major underlying factor.

Key Words: Reproductive health, training, knowledge level, soldiers, military, marriage

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